United Nations E/2002/SR.23

Economic and Social Council

Provisional
14 October 2002

Original: English

Substantive session for 2002
Coordination, operational activities and humanitarian affairs segments

Provisional summary record of the 23rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 15 July 2002, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Šimonović ..... (Croatia)
later: Mr. Buallay (Vice-President) ..... (Bahrain)

Contents

Strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration *(continued)*

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

02-48013 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration *(continued)* (E/2002/L.12)

Draft resolution E/2002/L.12

1. **The President** invited the Council to adopt draft resolution E/2002/L.12, entitled "Ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflicts".

2. *Draft resolution E/2002/L.12 was adopted.*

3. **Ms. Starbaek Christensen** (Observer for Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union supported the establishment of the new ad hoc advisory groups and, in particular, the flexible, time-limited approach taken and the stipulation that such groups would be created only at the request of the countries concerned. She looked forward to reviewing implementation of the mechanism once it had been put into practice.

4. **Mr. Carpio Govea** (Observer for Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the negotiations leading to the draft resolution's adoption had been among the most constructive in which he had participated. The ad hoc advisory groups were an innovative mechanism in the service of peace and development that would be of great benefit to Africa and might also serve as a model for future assistance to other regions.

5. **The President** said that the Council was mandated by the Charter of the United Nations to coordinate the activities of the agencies, funds and programmes in the areas of humanitarian assistance, economic and social reconstruction and development, and human rights, which were at the heart of peace-building. Recently, it had enhanced its cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector; however, more could be done, and the ad hoc advisory groups would provide an opportunity to mobilize those key players.

Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance (A/57/77-E/2002/63)

6. **The President** said that the issues of disaster-preparedness and recovery, complex emergencies, and relief and development were part of a larger picture. For example, in most cases, humanitarian coordinators also served as resident coordinators for development cooperation and, increasingly, as deputy special representatives of the Secretary-General. A key issue for the humanitarian segment would be the Council's timely response to humanitarian and, perhaps, other emergencies throughout the year.

7. *Mr. Buallay (Bahrain), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

8. **The President** said that it was important to ensure a close link between the two main themes of the humanitarian segment: natural disaster relief and the transition from relief to development. Once the critical phase of an emergency had passed, development must follow so that the victims were not condemned to live endlessly on the charity of others.

9. He recalled that the Council had decided that the final outcome of the segment should take the form of a draft resolution rather than agreed conclusions, as had been the case in 2001. Briefings would be held on emergency preparedness, protection of civilians in armed conflict and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS).

10. **Mr. Oshima** (Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/57/77-E/2002/63). By bringing together the various stakeholders — beneficiaries, donors, bilateral and international aid organizations, United Nations agencies and NGO partners — the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) ensured that assistance reached those in need. How such responses were coordinated depended on whether the situation involved a natural disaster, a conflict-related humanitarian crisis or both.

11. The countries affected by disasters and crises bore the major burden of response and therefore possessed the experience on which future action must be built. During the past year, he had focused on

improving coordination with developing countries, particularly those affected by disasters and emergencies, and on promoting systematic dialogue with the Group of 77 and China on the issues of natural disasters, information management and regional cooperation.

12. It was difficult to organize a response to crises without a clear understanding of the available support. His Office had worked with the donor community to establish aid coordination mechanisms, particularly in the context of the consolidated appeals process, and had discussed the development of agreed performance indicators as a way of improving accountability and overall response to natural disasters.

13. The events of 11 September 2001 had further emphasized the need for greater integration within the United Nations system and closer cooperation with NGO partners, Governments and, where necessary, the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. The past year had also offered opportunities for resolving some longstanding complex humanitarian emergencies, including those in Afghanistan, Angola and Sri Lanka. The principles of impartiality, neutrality and humanity, embodied in General Assembly resolution 46/182, had stood the test of time. That resolution also stressed the responsibility of States to provide assistance and the right of affected populations to receive it.

14. He had recently returned from a mission to Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia, where the impact of drought was placing over 12 million people at risk of hunger and long-term destitution. Ten years previously, a massive relief effort had averted a similar crisis in the same region; however, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, aggravated by political and economic factors, had robbed Southern Africa of key human resources in vital sectors. A major crisis could be averted through effective regional coordination and timely donor support, but the window of opportunity might be limited to a few months. He would soon seek Council members' support in the context of the Regional Appeal for Humanitarian Needs in Southern Africa. It was also important to build on the work of regional bodies such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

15. His subsequent mission to Angola had left him with both a sense of hope and an acute awareness of the remaining challenges. More than a quarter of the population had been forced from their homes during one of the world's longest-running conflicts; the recent ceasefire agreement had provided access to many of those victims for the first time in years, and the humanitarian community was struggling to serve 3 million people rather than the 1.9 million it had been assisting in early 2002. Coordination with the Government would be needed, particularly as the international community expected the Government to assume a greater burden of humanitarian aid, rehabilitation and reconstruction in order to consolidate peace and national reconciliation.

16. He had visited Afghanistan and its neighbours both before and after the events of 11 September 2001. The humanitarian situation there had improved somewhat, but tens of thousands of people were still vulnerable. The challenge was to ensure that all parts of the country continued to receive assistance in a rapidly changing environment, and the establishment of the new transitional authority made it necessary for relief efforts to support capacity-building and provide information services. His Office had also participated in the creation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and, within that framework, had provided relief to that country.

17. In 2001, the lives of some 170 million people worldwide had been disrupted by natural disasters. A rapid response to the volcanic eruption in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been made possible by the specialist resources of the peacekeeping operation in that country. However, 80 per cent of the response to natural disasters came from the community or country affected, which was why the United Nations must support national and local response capacities. Accordingly, the number of regional disaster response advisers, who would work closely with regional and national organizations, had been increased.

18. The increasing impact of natural disasters such as the recent floods in China that had affected 57 million people, could destroy or limit economic development in many parts of the world, particularly in developing countries. He planned to give greater priority to disaster risk management and to strengthen partnerships with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in order to ensure better synergy between disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response.

19. The Secretary-General and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee had taken allegations of the sexual abuse and exploitation of refugees and internally displaced persons in West Africa extremely seriously. The Standing Committee had agreed to establish standards of behaviour with clear management responsibilities and recourse mechanisms, and it was important that those initiatives should be put into practice.

20. Turning to the issues on which the Council had requested him to report, he announced that an independent review of humanitarian funding patterns had been completed in April 2002 and could be consulted on ReliefWeb. The review had shown that although there was a decline in the share of global humanitarian assistance that was channelled through the consolidated appeals process, that process was still perceived as providing the common framework for humanitarian assistance. He therefore urged greater donor coordination and engagement as a means of improving its effectiveness. A more comprehensive picture of humanitarian needs and assistance flows could be achieved by expanding the current financial tracking system to include all forms of humanitarian assistance; however, financial information would have to be provided by all partners, including Governments and NGOs.

21. The Unit on Internal Displacement within his Office had received sufficient funding to begin its work with staff seconded from humanitarian organizations. The Unit had visited and reviewed a number of countries, including Afghanistan, Liberia and Uganda, with a view to strengthening the system-wide response through improved mechanisms for the protection of internally displaced persons. The International Search and Rescue Advisory Group had developed international standards for the provision of urban search and rescue assistance and had been seeking more formal endorsement from Member States of mechanisms to improve cooperation and coordination in that field.

22. The Tampere Convention on the Provision of Telecommunication Resources for Disaster Mitigation and Relief Operations represented another effort to mobilize support for emergency communications. The Convention had to be ratified by 17 more Member States by 21 June 2003 in order to enter into force, and he urged States to become parties as soon as possible. The Convention would greatly improve the immediate response to natural disasters and the flow of assistance when speed was essential to saving lives.

23. **Mr. Motomura** (Japan) said that the humanitarian activities of the United Nations system must be carried out in strict compliance with the guiding principles set out by the General Assembly, which included impartiality and neutrality. He was pleased to note that the coordination mechanism for those activities had improved steadily over the past decade, as his Government believed that institutional memory and lessons learned were very important in such efforts.

24. Japan had centuries of experience of coping with natural disasters, and it therefore attached great importance to the problem they posed. His Government supported efforts to expand participation by developing countries in United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams, with a view to enhancing national disaster-response efforts. His Government also attached great importance to the search and rescue guidelines prepared by the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group and welcomed the ongoing review. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that disaster risk assessments should be integrated with reduction strategies in national and regional planning.

25. The international community needed to focus on the protection of civilians during armed conflicts and he welcomed the convening of regional workshops on the matter by OCHA. Japan was concerned at the plight of the growing number of internally displaced persons; it was providing the Unit on Internal Displacement with financial support and was considering ways of assisting the Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons. Also disturbing were the allegations of sexual abuse against United Nations humanitarian workers; the victims should receive speedy assistance, and the activities of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in that area would be closely monitored.

26. The international community must strive to make the transition from relief to development smooth. The Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People had been a positive step in that direction, and more active involvement of the international financial institutions would facilitate that effort.

27. Funding for humanitarian activities, especially in the case of "forgotten crises", must be continuous. However, a feasible strategy with priorities and realistic funding levels was essential to good donor response. The consolidated appeals process could be strengthened by involving NGOs more closely in the formulation of the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP) and developing a fund-tracking system to promote knowledge of funding in humanitarian crises.

28. **Mr. Negrín** (Mexico) said that his country's experience of natural disasters had led it to attach great importance to emergency humanitarian assistance. Mexico's approach had been to strengthen its national civil protection structure by focusing on prevention and establishing a disaster-relief fund. It had also developed an international cooperation policy which assisted disaster-stricken countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, and had sought to raise the profile of the issue on the international stage.

29. The report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/57/77-E/2002/63) provided a solid basis for analysis and the coordination of assistance. His delegation believed that a number of points were particularly important: the need for a prevention and early-warning system for armed conflicts and natural disasters; the targeting of assistance for vulnerable groups; the need for efficient and unbureaucratic coordination among United Nations agencies; local capacity-building; and the identification of strategies for the transition from relief to development.

30. Humanitarian emergencies caused by natural disasters and conflict were becoming more frequent and had a disproportionate effect on developing countries in terms of economic cost and loss of life. It was therefore unfortunate that the Council's substantive sessions had been unable to reach any agreement on that issue in the previous two years, or to keep it in a prominent place on both the international and the Council's agendas.

31. As in the past, the draft resolution for the humanitarian affairs segment was the subject of difficult negotiations. The text had to reconcile the humanitarian assistance principles adopted by consensus in General Assembly resolution 46/182 and relatively new phenomena which affected millions of people but lacked a legal framework. Reaching agreement at the current session would go some way to helping the victims of armed conflict and natural disasters.

32. **Ms. Løj** (Observer for Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and also Iceland, said that a central task for the Council's humanitarian affairs segment was the establishment of general guidelines for United Nations humanitarian activities. The European Union therefore welcomed the decision to have the segment conclude with the adoption of a resolution that would provide such guidance.

33. Humanitarian operations often involved many and diverse participants and were conducted with limited funds. That made it logical for the United Nations to coordinate such efforts, as called for in General Assembly resolution 46/182.

34. She welcomed the increasing focus on crisis prevention by addressing the root causes of crises and on closing the gap between emergency relief and longer-term development. What was needed, however, was continued dynamism and commitment, and in some cases a clearer division of labour and greater cooperation. National capacity-building was also vital, as long-term sustainability was impossible without it. Local communities and institutions must be fully involved in that effort, and human rights should be promoted in order to ensure stability.

35. The United Nations Disaster and Coordination (UNDAC) system established by OCHA made it possible to provide a coordinated response in emergencies, and it deserved and required the support of all United Nations agencies. The European Union was aware of the need to coordinate its own efforts to strengthen its crisis-management capacity with the United Nations in order to support the wider international response led by the Organization.

36. The European Union supported ongoing efforts in the United Nations system to meet the needs of internally displaced persons effectively and comprehensively through such means as the dissemination and implementation of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Similarly, in the light of the commitment made by the international community in the Millennium Declaration, the European Union was providing host countries with

assistance. It welcomed the attention being given to the most vulnerable refugees and displaced persons, who included women, children, the elderly and the disabled.

37. The safety and security of staff engaged in humanitarian assistance was of major concern to the European Union. She urged all concerned to abide by international humanitarian law and welcomed the entry into force of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. The European Union would continue its efforts to eradicate anti-personnel mines and to alleviate the suffering caused by those weapons.

38. As a major provider of humanitarian aid, the European Union actively supported the consolidated appeals process and encouraged all partners to participate actively in it, particularly in view of the current uneven pattern of funding. The existing financial tracking system for humanitarian assistance did not provide an adequate overview of the situation and broadening its coverage would improve the coordination of assistance. The organizations of the United Nations system had a responsibility to attract sufficient funding by delivering rapid, high-quality humanitarian assistance with greater transparency and accountability and substantiated results.

39. **Mr. Brazhnikov** (Russian Federation) drew attention to the serious humanitarian situation in the Northern Caucasus and thanked those donors who had provided assistance in that area. Especially since the events of 11 September 2001, there was an increased need for disaster-preparedness and disaster response. Since natural and man-made disasters often had far-reaching effects that transcended national borders, a more coordinated response was needed. He welcomed the proposals for improving the local response capacity of OCHA and humanitarian agencies and for strengthening OCHA presence in disaster-prone areas. The basic principles of humanitarian aid set out in General Assembly resolution 46/182 should be respected.

40. Currently, one of the most pressing issues was coping with the needs of internally displaced persons, yet there was no international instrument for dealing with such persons or even a single definition of that category of individuals. However, the United Nations system had built up considerable experience in dealing with displaced persons and he urged that all international efforts in that domain should reflect the fundamental principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, impartiality and lack of political bias.. The primary obligation and responsibility for protecting and assisting internally displaced persons however, lay with national Governments and such protection based on a combination of national legislation and international human rights law. Moreover, the entire humanitarian community must be guaranteed access to the most vulnerable in order to help them.

41. As the experience of post-conflict situations had demonstrated, the successful transition from relief to development was vital to peace-building, and should be the focus of the Council's attention. Concerted international action under the leadership of the United Nations was essential. All participants should also have a "standby capacity", similar to that of OCHA, that could be utilized immediately. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee was an important forum for recommending improvements to the humanitarian response to emergencies and to the implementation of the consolidated appeals process.

42. Planning and programming in the early stages of humanitarian operations were essential, as the Secretary-General's report made clear, and would contribute to peace-building and stability. Another vital task was involving the local population in humanitarian assistance and transitional programmes. The report had also recommended using the consolidated appeals process to combine relief efforts with reconstruction and development activities. It was therefore unfortunate that donors were directing fewer resources through the consolidated appeals process and more through bilateral NGO channels. The Russian Federation continued to advocate the establishment of an international agency on emergency situations, as it believed that such an organization would improve the use of existing capacities.

43. **Mr. Mamed-Guliyev** (Observer for Azerbaijan) said that his delegation wished to focus particularly on humanitarian emergencies caused by armed conflicts, which resulted in forced displacement, human suffering and economic, social and environmental problems. Chief among the victims of such conflicts were internally displaced persons, women, children and the elderly. Addressing the needs of the internally displaced demanded a comprehensive approach: timely and targeted humanitarian assistance and an improved international legal framework. Ultimately, however, the internally displaced could only return to their homes if

the conflict that had caused them to flee was settled; until that stage was reached, the volume of humanitarian aid should not decrease.

44. The establishment by the Emergency Relief Coordinator of an inter-agency Unit on Internal Displacement was a welcome step that would help to ensure that protracted or forgotten crises involving internal displacement, such as those in Angola, Burundi, Indonesia, Nigeria or Somalia, received attention. His delegation hoped that the Unit would also address internal displacement in Azerbaijan.

45. In contemporary armed conflicts, women and children become the main targets, as they were frequently taken hostage and subjected to violence and abuse. That was why Azerbaijan had sponsored resolutions in the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights that sought to address those problems.

46. Complex humanitarian emergencies required a holistic approach. Closer cooperation between international agencies and between Governments was crucial. All aspects — political, economic, legal and humanitarian — of such emergencies needed to be considered, and he welcomed the increasingly important role played by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in that regard. Dealing with complex emergencies was not easy, but that task had to be completed before progressing to the next stage: the no less challenging task of achieving the transition from relief to development.

47. **Ms. Pulido** (Observer for Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, welcomed the fact that the current segment would produce an outcome in which the views of Member States would be reflected, particularly those of developing countries. That marked an important step towards increasing understanding among stakeholders on issues relating to humanitarian assistance. Her delegation also welcomed the decision to consider the question of strengthening the coordination of humanitarian assistance, with particular attention paid to reaching vulnerable groups and to the transition from relief to development.

48. The guiding principles contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182 should continue to play a central role in the efficient and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. The primary responsibility for initiating, organizing, coordinating and implementing humanitarian assistance lay with affected States; there was, therefore, an imperative need for capacity-building at the local and national levels, allowing for better coordination and closer cooperation with the United Nations system and humanitarian organizations. States in need of humanitarian assistance were called upon to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations, in particular the provision of food, medicines, shelter and health care, for which access to the victims was essential. Capacity-building at all levels would also have a favourable effect on the development of strong early-warning and preparedness measures.

49. Internal conflicts in some developing countries, especially in Africa, had consumed most of those countries' human and material resources and devastated their economic infrastructure and social fabric. That situation had in turn constrained those countries' capacity to cope with natural disasters and their devastating impact on the population. A very high percentage of disaster victims lived in developing countries. Accordingly, much higher levels of attention and assistance were required from United Nations agencies and other humanitarian actors in the field. She welcomed efforts by the United Nations to become better prepared to respond to humanitarian emergencies.

50. Despite all those efforts, the challenge of coordinating humanitarian activities within the United Nations system as well as addressing complex emergencies in a timely, adequate and efficient manner still remained to be met. Another serious challenge was that of funding for rapid response. She welcomed the proposal presented by the Secretary-General in his report for the development of a global humanitarian financial tracking system. Her delegation had noted with concern the drastic decline in flows of humanitarian assistance through the consolidated appeals process. That situation must be reversed if the international community was to respond swiftly and effectively to humanitarian crises. Funding was also a challenge in the context of the transition from relief to development, which in turn was intimately related to national capacity-building. Investment in development activities that would promote self-reliance and stability in the countries affected must be considered during the planning phase of humanitarian assistance programmes.

51. Recipient and donor countries, the United Nations system and humanitarian organizations must work

together to provide much-needed support in both humanitarian and development fields. She called on the United Nations system and the international community to strengthen their efforts to provide humanitarian assistance and protection to civilians, particularly those under foreign occupation, and to undertake the necessary efforts to end such occupation so that all peoples of the world could enjoy their fundamental human rights in dignity and peace.

52. Attention should be given to the particular vulnerability of persons with disabilities in situations of complex emergencies and natural disasters. It was also important to take into account, at all phases of the planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance, the particular problems faced by women, including sexual violence, abuse, trafficking and exploitation. The Group of 77 and China were in favour of all the efforts of the United Nations system to ensure that cases of sexual abuse committed by humanitarian workers against women and children did not recur.

53. **Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga** (Observer for Ecuador) said that climate change had become the main factor responsible for the growing frequency and intensity of natural disasters. Extreme weather events had doubled in the past five years, and if that trend was not countered with aggressive disaster-reduction measures, more than 100,000 people would die by the year 2015 and the direct economic losses would exceed US$ 300 billion annually. The environmental impact of such disasters would also become more severe, largely as a result of the loss of water, forests and biodiversity.

54. Poverty was the main reason for people's increasing exposure to natural risks and hazards. Indeed, poverty was responsible for an over-exploitation of natural resources, increased environmental degradation, accelerated and unplanned urbanization and a marked lack of investment in basic infrastructure, which led natural risks and hazards to turn into natural disasters. The poor, always the most adversely affected by such disasters, were thereby condemned to greater hardships and even fewer opportunities, with deepening social inequality.

55. Those facts should constitute the basis for a clear definition of priorities within the United Nations. Although international response mechanisms had improved markedly in recent years, there was still much scope for more effective coordination. It must be borne in mind that disaster response and relief efforts in general were not enough; activities aimed at reducing vulnerability and minimizing natural hazards on an ongoing basis should constitute a priority and should be supported by international cooperation.

56. When addressing disaster risk-reduction it was particularly important to consider the transboundary nature of natural hazards. Accordingly, the development and implementation of regional and international activities such as capacity-building, technology transfers and the development of early-warning systems should be given priority. By way of example, Ecuador was committed to international cooperation to reduce the impact of the El Niño phenomenon, and an international centre for the study of that phenomenon was scheduled to be opened in Guayaquil in November 2002.

57. **Mr. Gamaleldin** (Egypt) said that the provision of humanitarian assistance in the event of natural or man-made disasters, such as wars, was an essential task of the international community. Among the main challenges in that area were ensuring that all parties in an armed struggle respected the rights of civilians by complying with international humanitarian law and ensuring that the requisite coordination existed between United Nations bodies and that they cooperated with all other parties involved in providing humanitarian assistance, so that the civilian population had access to assistance, in accordance with the principles set forth in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182. Humanitarian assistance must be provided to civilians by agreement with the States concerned or at their request, and with full respect for their sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. The situation was particularly difficult if a State lacked a central Government able to impose order throughout its territory. The General Assembly should therefore define, in a transparent manner and with the cooperation of all States, the steps the Organization should take in such cases. His delegation welcomed the fact that the current humanitarian segment was concentrating on access to vulnerable groups, especially women and children, in the context of international efforts to protect civilians in armed conflict and supported the efforts being made to strengthen search and rescue activities in populated areas in the event of disasters.

58. He endorsed the international community's appeal to all States and parties involved in conflicts to respect the rights of civilians and to fulfil their

obligations under international law, particularly the Geneva Conventions. Civilians must not become the victims of efforts to achieve political or military objectives or be treated as "human shields". The same standards must be applied in all cases, since the principles of international law were binding on all States, irrespective of size. He also endorsed the appeal by the Secretary-General for the establishment of a culture of protection in respect of civilians in armed conflicts and called for wide-ranging international consultations to define the implications of that important concept and ways in which it could be given practical effect.

59. In considering humanitarian assistance, the Council must not overlook conflicts arising from foreign occupation. In that connection, he appealed to the international community to address the humanitarian catastrophe being faced by the Palestinian people, both to afford protection to that people and to save the peace process in the Middle East. Israel's actions in the Palestinian territories had led to a humanitarian disaster there, bringing about the complete collapse of territories' political, economic, humanitarian and environmental infrastructure. An enormous number of civilians had been killed, buildings had been demolished, the population displaced and property destroyed. The delivery of international assistance had also been thwarted. The Palestinian people merely sought to enjoy its natural right to independence and freedom and the implementation of the resolutions of the Security Council, the principles agreed at the Madrid Conference and the principle of land for peace. The establishment of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on the equal right to security and on respect for international resolutions was the only way to end the bloodshed on both sides and to ensure a better future for the Palestinian and Israeli people. He paid a tribute to the work being done by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and urged donor countries to increase their support to the efforts of UNRWA and other organizations that were working to assist the Palestinian people. He further appealed to donors to oppose efforts to prevent assistance from reaching those for whom it was intended, including the Syrian population in the occupied Golan.

60. OCHA should coordinate with UNRWA in monitoring the humanitarian situation of civilians under foreign occupation, and he hoped that the Secretary-General's report to the Council the following year would include an analysis of the efforts made by the Organization to that end, the situation in the occupied territories and the difficulties encountered in the provision of international humanitarian assistance, together with proposals on ways of resolving those difficulties, so that the General Assembly could adopt appropriate resolutions on the matter.

61. Internally displaced persons were among the civilians protected by the four Geneva Conventions of 1949. Migrants were primarily the responsibility of Governments, and it was incumbent on the international community to help those Governments provide assistance to their citizens. Egypt was willing to make an effort to overcome the differences that had attended the preparation and discussion of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, provided that the problems relating to the status of the Guiding Principles were resolved through consultations with Governments having observations to make on some of them. The Representative of the Secretary-General on displaced persons should then submit a report on those consultations to the Council and to the General Assembly so that the Guiding Principles could be appropriately amended.

62. It was of the greatest importance that the General Assembly should play a leading role in monitoring and evaluating the provision of humanitarian assistance. He called on all organizations concerned to assist States in national capacity-building and to ensure that their own efforts were duly coordinated so that disaster relief could be dealt with through an integrated approach. Lastly, he urged States and international funding institutions to increase their contributions to humanitarian assistance, in accordance with the principle of solidarity and in the spirit of the United Nations Charter.

63. **Mr. Garvelink** (United States of America) said that the response of the United States and the civilized world to the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan had demonstrated the value of coordination and the importance of laying the groundwork during the emergency phase of a crisis to ensure a rapid transition to recovery, rehabilitation and long-term sustainable development. An effective humanitarian response required coordination of early-warning mechanisms, the sharing and analysis of information, continuous needs assessments, coordination between the

humanitarian community and the military, as appropriate, and, of course, adequate resources. The relief effort in Afghanistan had been facilitated by the established presence there of many agencies which had already been providing assistance to victims of conflict and drought prior to 11 September 2001, the coordination of the humanitarian response by OCHA, the delivery of food and humanitarian assistance by the World Food Programme (WFP) and NGOs under the most difficult conditions and ongoing assessments of refugees and internally displaced persons by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The United States and many other donors were also fostering self-reliance through the Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan people, which linked the emergency phase of the crisis to recovery, rehabilitation and long-term development. The Programme's success, however, was highly dependent on good governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights on the part of the Afghan Government. Humanitarian assistance was also needed in other crisis areas, including Somalia, the Sudan, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola.

64. Notwithstanding the severity of the problems in Afghanistan, it should be recalled that, in all those places, it was the primary responsibility of the Government to provide for the people and protect their rights.

65. The United States fully supported the efforts of the United Nations Security Coordinator to improve the safety and security of humanitarian personnel in the field, who were increasingly targeted by militants and armed factions. His delegation looked forward to the guidance manual being developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on the terms of engagement with armed groups in conflict situations. The United States strongly supported the Secretary-General's call for a culture of protection and believed that every humanitarian worker was responsible for promoting it. A culture of protection, however, depended partly on a culture of training within the United Nations specialized agencies, since the majority of humanitarian workers lacked adequate training or preparation to fulfil their responsibilities in that regard. Most importantly, a culture of protection must rest upon a culture of accountability, built on enforceable codes of conduct, rigorous oversight and monitoring of assistance programmes and effective mechanisms for reporting abuses of power. Expressing outrage at the sexual exploitation of refugee and displaced children in West Africa, he called for swift implementation of the recommendations made by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee task force on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian crises.

66. His delegation welcomed and supported the work of the inter-agency Unit on Internal Displacement. Noting that most of those benefiting from humanitarian assistance were women, children, the elderly and the infirm, he expressed support for the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's efforts to mainstream gender analysis into every aspect of its work.

67. Donors must do more to support the consolidated appeals process. The United States had provided over 60 per cent of all WFP resources in 2001, 48 per cent of the combined response to all consolidated appeals and 25 per cent of the budget of UNHCR. Meanwhile, the contributions of each of the other major donors to the overall consolidated appeals process had come to less than 11 per cent. It was also important to strengthen coordination in complex emergencies and natural disasters. His delegation welcomed the focus in the Secretary-General's report on humanitarian space and the recommendation that NGOs should be involved in the development of humanitarian strategies. All strategies must be aimed at ensuring self-reliance among the beneficiaries and a smooth transition to recovery, rehabilitation and long-term development.

68. His delegation supported the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group in its effort to promote international standards for the coordination and mobilization of search and rescue teams. It also appreciated and supported the efforts of OCHA to facilitate the exchange of information among multilateral, governmental and non-governmental actors through such tools as ReliefWeb, the Integrated Regional Information Network and humanitarian information centres in the field.

69. **Mr. Khalid** (Pakistan) said that, while the United Nations system had the necessary expertise to cope with humanitarian emergencies, a shortage of resources was the major impediment to disaster-management efforts. Regrettably, the lack of political will on the part of donors had resulted in a 10 per cent loss in the market share of the consolidated appeals process. He also noted that as new emergencies arose, old ones were neglected. He called for a comprehensive

assessment of situations involving internally displaced persons and of the economic, social and environmental burden on countries — such as Afghanistan — that were hosting large numbers of refugees.

70. In order to ensure the repatriation of refugees, humanitarian relief assistance must be coupled with development strategies, beginning with the establishment of peace and security and extending to demining, repair of damaged infrastructure and, above all, the provision of substantial financial and material support, including seeds and agricultural equipment. Existing United Nations institutions and mechanisms, such as the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the consolidated appeals process, could develop strategies for capacity-building in developing countries to meet humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. Local authorities must in all circumstances facilitate access by United Nations and humanitarian agencies' aid workers to affected populations.

71. Based on its own experience, Pakistan wished to propose that future natural disaster strategies should include contingency planning by United Nations country teams for all possible risks, in consultation with host Governments; the establishment of an emergency reserve fund; and capacity-building in disaster management at the local level. OCHA and other institutions could identify innovative ways to achieve the latter. He stressed the importance of direct participation by local communities and populations in the transition from relief to development and called for the allocation of a higher quantum of development aid to countries hosting vast numbers of refugees. His delegation hoped that the Council's current deliberations would lead to a common strategy for addressing the issue of humanitarian assistance in a holistic manner.

72. **Mr. Palu** (Australia) said that his country had consistently advocated effective, coordinated responses to emergency and relief situations. The Secretary-General's report covered several issues of importance to his Government, including the need for effectively coordinated responses to complex emergencies, improvements in protection for civilians, the need to mainstream gender into the humanitarian response to emergencies and the establishment of the Unit on Internal Displacement.

73. Over three quarters of Australia's bilateral assistance operations were in countries that were vulnerable to, experiencing or recovering from conflict. The Government's new Peace, Conflict and Development Policy would increase the Australian aid programme's focus on preventing conflict and building peace along with its more traditional missions of humanitarian relief and reconstruction. Events of the past few years, including a growing civilian death toll and the frequency and severity of assaults on humanitarian personnel, had demonstrated continuing disregard for international humanitarian law, human rights and refugee law. Australia supported the efforts to improve protection for civilians outlined in the Secretary-General's report. His Government was also deeply disturbed by allegations of sexual abuse of children by humanitarian workers, and supported the measures taken by organizations of the United Nations system to develop codes of conduct and staff monitoring and training and to improve gender distribution among staff. However, permanent staff and long-term community service staff, rather than the current emergency teams, were needed to fully address the protection issue.

74. Australia warmly welcomed the emphasis in the report on the capacities of women as agents for change, and the recognition that much more needed to be done to reach women affected by crises and to actively support their capacity to contribute to the response. Women must have equal access to and full participation in power structures and be involved in all efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and promote peace and security. It was essential that gender integration should occur at the earliest stages of all peace-building activities and disaster-preparedness and recovery programmes.

75. He was pleased to see the emphasis placed on transition from relief to long-term development. His delegation supported the involvement of UNDP and other development agencies at the earliest stages of crisis response, including the consolidated appeals process. That mechanism was a useful tool for ongoing strategic planning and monitoring as well as resource mobilization. His delegation had played an active role in the recent review of the process, and was particularly concerned about the review's findings that there was a lack of progress in prioritizing projects to be included in the appeal, that projects were still not properly screened and that agencies were still

struggling to separate wider humanitarian means from narrower institutional ones. It was imperative that the consolidated appeals process should be seen not simply as a fund-raising exercise but as a full strategic planning tool.

76. **Mr. Lehne** (Observer for Norway) said that the Secretary-General's call for the establishment of a culture of protection was highly appropriate. His delegation welcomed the establishment of the Unit on Internal Displacement within OCHA and hoped that its work would be based on the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. Calling the exceedingly high number of internally displaced persons one of the main humanitarian challenges of the time, he urged Member States to provide the Unit with the necessary financial support. The Unit would also need the continued support of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

77. He stressed the importance of sustained adequate financial commitment from donors and further improvements in coordination by the United Nations. Norway continued to support the consolidated appeals process as a means of improving coordination and avoiding duplication. Despite the progress made in truly consolidating appeals, however, there were still considerable challenges to be met. The steady decline in the proportion of humanitarian assistance channelled through the consolidated appeals process was particularly paradoxical at a time when greater efforts were being made to improve that process. Persistent underfunding could hinder the effectiveness of the process, and donors' continued tendency to favour bilateral assistance over multilateral funding could reduce its coordination possibilities. His delegation was pleased that the United Nations was seeking to remedy the situation and commended the Organization on its commitment to strengthening the resident/humanitarian coordinator system. The United Nations should work even more closely with NGOs and other non-United Nations organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross. His delegation hoped to see a stronger relationship between NGO activities and the consolidated appeals process. It welcomed the Secretary-General's emphasis on enhancing local capabilities and shared his view that international efforts must complement those of local actors.

78. Greater attention should be focused on consolidated appeals projects during the difficult period between the provision of humanitarian assistance and the arrival of long-term aid. In response to the Secretary-General's call for more timely participation of development actors and improved donor funding throughout the transition period, Norway had established a specific budgetary allocation for consolidated appeals projects, mainly for countries emerging from conflict situations. Such transitional assistance could be included in the Common Humanitarian Action Plan. The Immediate and Transitional Appeal Programme for Afghanistan, a coordinated response by development and humanitarian agencies, was an interesting new approach which might be replicated.

79. National Governments bore the primary responsibility for protecting internally displaced persons; however, if they were unable to do so, they must ensure access by humanitarian workers, guarantee those workers' safety and take into account the relevant financial implications. In conclusion, he emphasized the paramount importance of political action in making humanitarian assistance available and in preventing the situations that necessitated it.

80. **Mr. Rosenthal** (Guatemala) expressed agreement with most of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General. As a nation which was extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, particularly earthquakes and hurricanes, and had large numbers of internally displaced persons and refugees, Guatemala supported the views expressed by the observer for Venezuela on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. His delegation believed that the United Nations already had the tools to respond to humanitarian emergencies but must determine how best to use them.

81. Although States bore the primary responsibility for assisting victims of natural disasters and other emergencies, in certain situations the international community had a duty to intervene. In that connection, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that the protection of civilians must be based on respect for the provisions of international humanitarian law, human rights and the rights of refugees. Noting that the greatest challenge lay in meeting the needs of the most vulnerable groups, he expressed support for the establishment of the Unit on Internal Displacement within OCHA. His delegation also agreed with the Secretary-General on adopting a regional and subregional focus which could become international: for example, the provision of humanitarian assistance to disaster victims in Central America. Stressing the

importance of the relief-to-development transition, including capacity-building in respect of local authorities, he welcomed the Secretary-General's idea of combining relief and development assistance in a single track through the consolidated appeals process. He also noted with concern the decline in the proportion of humanitarian assistance channelled through that mechanism.

82. Coherence among the various actors in humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters could be enhanced through a partnership between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and also through greater coherence among the various agencies of the United Nations system and between those agencies and other entities which provided humanitarian assistance. The Council must do its utmost to ensure the rational distribution of tasks among the partners; its deliberations should culminate in a specific resolution to that end.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.